

The Watcher Rod Chester

A matter of space and time

Captain James T. Kirk has finally been born, but not in his hometown. At least, not as we know it ...



CAPTAIN James T. Kirk, although he won't be born for another two centuries, has been the favourite fictional son of Riverside, Iowa, for 25 years. Now —

or should it be then? — Iowa's all-American hero has turned out to be an alien from outer space.

This, as you might have gathered, is a confusing

tale where time has been twisted and the facts merged with fantasy.

To clarify things, let's go back to the beginning. Or at least, let's go back to

the past when we could be sure about the events of the future and the way the beginning eventually would begin.

Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry, in writing his tale of life on board the USS Enterprise, said Kirk was a kid from Iowa.

The good people of Riverside, a small town in Iowa, decided to extend that description and declared their town, with Roddenberry's blessing, as the birthplace of the man who, regardless of what some Trekkies would have us believe, is never really born.

For 25 years, the town has proudly displayed a plaque honouring Kirk's birth on March 22, 2228, and tourists flock to the town for an annual *Star Trek* festival.

Trek Fest spokesman Herb Kane says Kirk was (or at least will be) conceived under the pool table inside Murphy's Bar & Grill in the heart of the town.

Captain James T. Kirk, fictional or not, has put the town of 928 on the international map.

So now we've caught up to the present, let's look at the problems the future is about to cause.

Some marketing fellow at Paramount Studios in the US heard about Riverside and saw a good opportunity. Rather than let

the birthplace of Captain Kirk wait, along with the rest of the world, to see the new *Star Trek* movie that relaunches the familiar characters in the shape of a new generation of actors, the town was honoured with a pre-release screening.

With a story that starts with the birth of James T. Kirk, why not take that story to the town that claims that birth?

Except — and this is the problem — Kirk wasn't born that way. Sure, he is born in the movie, but he's born in a shuttle escaping from an exploding spaceship.

If you think the good folk at Riverside were disappointed, think again. It takes more than just a few new facts to dim their enthusiasm.

Kane says Riverside loved the new movie. "The space-birth didn't phase anyone," he says. "*Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry gave Riverside his stamp of approval as the official future birthplace of Captain James T. Kirk back in 1985."

"That is a part of Riverside's history and that will never go away."

"Regarding the new movie, the bottom line is James T. Kirk's home town is Riverside, Iowa — the town itself is mentioned in the movie when they referred to the Riverside Shipyards."

So how do you explain the fact that everyone gets to see Kirk isn't a local lad? Kane points to the plot of the new movie, which involves time travel, worm holes and alternative realities.

"This whole movie takes place in a separate, parallel time dimension. Perhaps Kirk was born in Riverside, Iowa, under normal conditions in the other dimension. Only time will tell."

Star Trek is in cinemas now.

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